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Reference Code: 2021/96/2

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(18 PAGES)

cc PST
PSS, F. G. Jay
AIS J. H. V. (on ret)
Joint Sec
M. Manselgh
E. Murray
T. Dalton
A. L. Lom
C. S. L. A.

TO: HQ FROM: CGNY
FOR : G. Corr FROM: Donal Hamill

cc. M. Collins, Embassy, Washington

RE: National Committee on American Foreign Policy Conference

1. Today's conference on Northern Ireland, organised by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy at the Waldorf Astoria, was attended by a large media presence and some 300-350 invited guests.
2. Attached is a copy of Gerry Adams' address at the Conference (which was the only presentation copied and available) together with the NCAP press release and other background material.
3. The conference comprised three one-hour presentations, each consisting of a half-hour presentation and a half-hour Q & A session. The order of speakers (decided by draw) was John Alderdice, John Hume and Gerry Adams.
4. Alderdice gave a predictable presentation - articulate, at times clever, but essentially pessimistic regarding the prospects for peace. He noted in particular the significant absences of Molyneux and Paisley.
5. Hume gave a typically strong speech, opening with an impassioned recital of the statistics of the conflict, the human tragedy, the walls of Belfast and the fixed notions/mindsets of nationalists and unionists alike.

He went on to link in his European experience, his private dialogue with Gerry Adams, which had the overall objective of saving human life, and the Joint Declaration, which he described as the most comprehensive statement on the NI situation in the past 70 years.

6. Gerry Adams' presentation is attached. In subsequent questioning, he said that if the Joint Declaration is the first step, then the second step (after clarification) is agreement by the British and Irish Governments to adopt, as a policy objective, Irish national self-determination; secondly, the achievement of this within a negotiated timescale, and, thirdly, consultations designed to move forward on that agenda. He said that this would require flexibility, perhaps interim processes and guarantees for the unionists. He described this as a package he could sell.
7. Overall, Adams said that he came to the United States to be taught and that free flow of information in both directions was vital - as was the need for continued dialogue. He commended President Clinton and described the conference as a concrete contribution to the search for peace.
8. Further details will be reported separately.

EMBARGUED TIME: 5:00 PM
FEBRUARY 1, 1994ADDRESS TO
NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICYGerry Adams
1 February, 1994

I would like to begin today by thanking the National Committee on American Foreign Policy for giving me this opportunity to address you on the peace initiative on which Sinn Fein has been engaged and the opportunities for peace in Ireland which currently exist. I wish also to publicly acknowledge and thank all those who helped to secure a visa for me to attend this conference, and the many Irish Americans and supporters of free speech who have tirelessly campaigned against visa-denial. I wish to extend greetings also to the many people here in the USA who have worked consistently for the cause of freedom, justice and peace in Ireland.

The recent past has seen important movement towards peace through negotiation and dialogue in some of the world's most difficult trouble spots. The progress towards democracy and an end to apartheid in South Africa was followed by the beginning of negotiations between the PLO, representing the Palestinian people, and the Israeli government after decades of hostility and war. The lessons are clear; conflict resolution requires dialogue and negotiation. The conflict in Ireland is no different and, over the past months, important steps have been taken in this direction. Sinn Fein has always expressed its willingness to engage in discussions without pre-conditions. Our political priority is to advance a peace process based on inclusive negotiations. The development of open debate and dialogue can only assist such a process. No situation is improved by ignorance or misinformation.

This forum, organized by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, by encouraging such necessary dialogue and the free exchange of information, can assist the developing peace process in Ireland. I am, therefore, pleased to address you here today. I am sorry that only one unionist party is represented here today. Mr. Paisley and Molyneux should be here to assist and contribute to these proceedings. So too should the British government.

We live in momentous times, with those peace efforts underway in the Middle East, South Africa and Ireland. My role here is to tell you of our part in shaping that peace process in Ireland and to ask the help of the US government in achieving it.

Today, we in Ireland are very aware that 44.3 million Irish Americans claim roots from Ireland. Worldwide there are an estimated 70 million Irish in the Diaspora, an incredible figure if one considers that Ireland today is an island of only 5 million people.

Here in the US, millions of Irish, fleeing repression and famine, found a welcome refuge in the United States. No other group with the exception of African Americans came to these shores with less prospects; no group rose to prominence so quickly. In the lifetime of many people here, the Irish have gone from "No Irish Need Apply" signs to the White House, from owning bars to running boardrooms. John F Kennedy, the grandson of famine era immigrants rose to the highest political position in the nation. President Clinton too can claim Irish roots on his mother's side.

Amongst Irish Americans, there is also a continuing sadness at the ongoing tragedy in the north of Ireland. The memory of Abraham Lincoln and his extraordinary struggle to save his nation from partition has an eerie echo in Ireland where we have lived under the failed partition of our own country since 1921.

Wolfe Tone, the first political thinker to dream of an Irish republic was heavily influenced by the reality that beyond his shores lay a great sprawling nation called America already conceived in liberty and dedicated to equality.

Sinn Fein is actively engaged in seeking an end to this conflict, to call armed actions and a total demilitarisation of the situation. Our peace strategy is the central function of Sinn Fein as a political party. At a personal level, it is my over-riding priority and we have advanced the search for peace to the point where it is at the centre of the political agenda in both Ireland and Britain. US help is vital.

SINN FEIN'S PEACE STRATEGY

For Sinn Fein, the search for an effective peace process began over 7 years ago. It was clear that an effective political initiative was necessary to break the military and political dead-lock and to move us out of what was developing into a permanent conflict. Successive British initiatives - political, economic and military - had failed precisely because they were just that - British initiatives, which ignored the central causes of the conflict - partition and denial by Britain of the right of the Irish people to national self-determination.

It is ironic that while the British government was engaged in its propaganda war against us and those we represent, while it was censoring Sinn Fein and preventing me from entering Britain, and through pressure, the US, they were simultaneously engaged with Sinn Fein in prolonged contact and dialogue without pre-conditions.

Sinn Fein entered into direct contact with the British government in a genuine attempt to advance the search for peace. During the course of this contact the British government proposed that a British government delegation should meet with a Sinn Fein delegation for an intense round of negotiations. We were asked to seek a short suspension of IRA operations to facilitate these discussions. Given the importance of this Sinn Fein sought, and was given, a commitment from the leadership of the Irish Republican Army that it would suspend operations for two weeks to facilitate these discussions. This was conveyed to the British government in May last year.

Although we were informed that this positive response by republicans to the British proposal was the subject of a series of high-level meetings by British ministers and officials, including John Major, there was no positive response by them. In fact, the British moved away from their proposal and refused to follow it through.

The bad faith and double dealing involved in this clearly presents serious difficulties for us in assessing the sincerity of the British government in relation to the present opportunities for peace. The history of this contact underlines clearly that republicans are serious and are prepared to show flexibility in the search for a lasting peace.

THE BRITISH PRESENCE

Britain's role in Ireland has never been benign. It has always acted as a dominating colonial power. Britain's presence and influence has been divisive and destructive and has prevented the Irish people from resolving our differences. The whole notion of Britain as a peace-keeping agent in Ireland flies in the face of historical and present reality.

The divisions and conflict in Ireland today, as in the past, stem from the immediate realities of the British presence. The "Northern Ireland" state was created by Britain in 1921 when London partitioned our country, without the

consent and against the wishes of the vast majority of the Irish people. Since its creation this state has been in a state of perpetual crisis, existing only by virtue of draconian legislation, by repression and injustice and in a permanent 'state of emergency'.

Since 1969, when the reality of life for Irish nationalists living in the British created a sectarian state was exposed to international scrutiny, despite some modest reforms, the overall situation has not improved for nationalists. This is despite the sophisticated propaganda of the British government that their contribution over the last 20 years has been to reform and improve the sectarian state. The inequalities and injustice on which the state was founded have not been removed. Rather new layers of repression and injustice have been added as the British struggle frantically to stabilise their crumbling colony.

Britain has the worst record on human rights abuse of any signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights. It has been brought before the European Court on 31 occasions and has been found in violation of the Convention 21 times. Now, however, they have the opportunity to play a positive role in a definitive peace process.

NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-determination is a nation's exercise of the political freedom to determine its own economic, social and cultural development, without external influence and without partial or total disruption of the national unity or territorial integrity.

Ireland today clearly does not have this freedom, nor does the pretext for partition hold good against these criteria.

In the words of Sean MacBride, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize:

"Ireland's right to sovereignty, independence and unity are inalienable and indefensible. It is for the Irish people as a whole to determine the future status of Ireland. Neither Britain nor a small minority selected by Britain has any right to partition the ancient island of Ireland, nor to determine its future as a sovereign nation."

The right of the Irish people, as a whole, to self-determination is supported by universally recognised principles of international law.

Sinn Fein considers the realisation of the right of the Irish people to national self-determination as our primary political objective. The denial by the British government of this right to our people is the major source of conflict in our country today.

It is the British government's refusal to recognise Irish national rights - nationhood, integrity of the national territory, national independence and sovereignty - which is at the heart of the political divisions and conflict in Ireland today. The primary political divisions in Ireland, north and south, and between north and south, result from partition and from the British claims to jurisdiction in Ireland.

The partition of Ireland does not only affect the north of Ireland, it affects all of Ireland, socially and economically. It saps our national morale and consciousness and actively retards our ability as a nation to shape all our affairs, to resolve the causes of poverty, emigration and unemployment as well as the other more obvious causes of death and destruction -- the conflict itself.

THE UNIONIST VETO

The British government's public justification for its involvement in Irish affairs is that the unionists have a veto. That is, that there can be no movement without the consent of a majority in the British created state. This is a perversion of democratic principles. It is also a subterfuge. The British claim to jurisdiction in Ireland is based on the Government of Ireland Act. So far as British constitutional law is concerned, the sovereignty of parliament is absolute. The Government of Ireland Act is an act of a British parliament. That parliament is constitutionally empowered to end its jurisdiction in Ireland if it so wishes.

Today's unionists represent some 20% of the Irish nation. They are a national minority; a significant minority, but a minority nevertheless. To bestow the power of veto over national independence and sovereignty on a national minority is in direct contravention of the principle of national self-determination.

To accept the veto means accepting that there can be no progress. It means accepting the failed policy of partition. Although the 6 county state has existed for 70 years, it has not developed a democratic integrity. The 6 county state had no political, democratic or economic validity when it was created by Britain. It has no validity today. It survives only by massive military force, by torture and summary execution, by the perversion of all accepted forms of justice and law, by the controlled use of loyalist death squads. 70 years of injustice is an argument for an end to partition, not for its continuation.

The 6 county state remains politically and economically unstable and unviable. partition locks northern nationalists into a state to which they owe no allegiance. It ties unionists to a negative laagar view of themselves and of their future.

UNIONIST RIGHTS

Sinn Fein recognises that unionists have democratic rights which not only can be upheld but must be upheld in an independent Ireland. We believe that those democratic rights would be greatly strengthened in an independent Ireland.

Sinn Fein has long accepted that northern Protestants have fears about their civil and religious liberties and we have consistently asserted that those liberties must be guaranteed and protected.

We seek to be part of the building of a society which can reflect and uphold the diversity of all our people. Our vision is of a free Ireland, a peaceful Ireland, a unity of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter with all citizens guaranteeing the civil and religious rights of all other citizens. We hold to the words of the 1916 Proclamation which said:

"The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the national equally, and oblivious of the differences, carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Sinn Fein seeks a new constitution O Ireland with a charter of rights which would include written guarantees for those presently constituted as "loyalists". Their participation would ensure that the new Ireland would accommodate the diversity of the Irish people.

As unionists have frequently pointed out, most emphatically since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985, the British government has, where it sees fit, chosen to ignore the wishes of the unionist population. This concept

of consent is one applied selectively, and rarely, by the British government and only when it coincides with their own political interests.

THE 'CONSENT' ARGUMENT

The argument that the consent of the unionist population is a pre-condition for any political movement is entirely bogus and without democratic basis. Consent, applied in this absolutist way effectively becomes a veto, locking the unionist community into a no-change mind-set. There is no reason for them to reach an accommodation with the rest of the Irish people as long as their present position is guaranteed and underwritten by Britain. We are left in a situation of political stale-mate and on-going conflict.

The late Catholic Primate of all-Ireland, Cardinal O Fiaich, speaking in 1985, four days after the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed commented that:

"The present policy of the British government - that there will be no change in the status of Northern Ireland while the majority want British rule to remain - is no policy at all. It means you do nothing and it means that the loyalists in the north are given no encouragement to make a move of any kind."

And of course the theory of consent has never been extended to nationalists and ignores the fact that 600,000 nationalists were forcibly coerced into the 6 county state. Where is the principle of democratic consent for northern nationalists?

The argument that the consent of a national minority, elevated into a majority within an undemocratic artificially created state, is necessary before any constitutional change can occur is a nonsense. It ignores the fact that the present constitutional arrangements, based on partition, have led to decades of bloody war and that all attempts to find a solution within these confines have failed. It ignores the reality in British and international law that the British government, if it wishes, can legislate itself out of Ireland.

BRITISH RESPONSIBILITY

The exercise of the right to Irish national self-determination requires a change in current British government policy and the removal of the veto.

Within the context of such a policy change Sinn Fein believes that agreement between people of the nationalist and unionist traditions becomes, for the first time, an achievable objective.

We believe that consent can be obtained of the relevant parties, and particularly the London and Dublin governments, demonstrate the political will to achieve it. Both governments would accept Irish national self-determination as a policy objective within an acceptable time frame to achieve this.

THE IRISH PEACE INITIATIVE

Sinn Fein has attempted to create a political debate around these core issues and, in doing so, to develop a peace process which could address the central causes of conflict in Ireland.

The publication of our discussion document, "A Scenario for Peace", in 1987, marked the public launch of our peace strategy.

This peace strategy resulted from an intensive analysis and review of the conflict and overall political situation in Ireland. It was clear that the resolution of the conflict was dependent on the removal of the fundamental causes of that conflict and that peace would only result from a negotiated settlement which dealt politically and effectively with the key issues. Sinn

Fein concluded that the first step in this process was to put these key issues at the centre of the political agenda. In "Pathway to Peace", published in 1988 and other areas of private dialogue were elements of the developing peace strategy.

While the British talks proceeded and faltered, republicans argued that the whole approach of the British government was fundamentally flawed and that the resolution of the national question and the securing of the right of the Irish people to national self-determination was the most urgent issue facing us all. Lasting peace could only be achieved by the creation of a national democracy which could accommodate the diversity of the Irish people. This could not be achieved by partitionist arrangements which perpetuated division and conflict.

The document, "Towards a Lasting Peace", adopted by Sinn Fein at the 1992 Ard Fheis, significantly refined Sinn Fein's analysis of the conflict and the means by which it could be resolved.

It acknowledges in its opening paragraph that the "heartfelt aspiration of most people in Ireland is for peace... A peace process, if it is to be both meaningful and enduring, must address the root causes of the conflict. For our part, we believe that a genuine and sustainable peace process must be set in the context of democracy and self-determination."

As we increasingly addressed this area of political activity, the Sinn Fein peace strategy became our central function as a political party.

Members of our national leadership were given specific responsibilities to engage with as many organisations, groups and individuals as possible, including our political opponents and enemies at both public and private levels, to encourage the development of an overall peace process. The prolonged contact between Sinn Fein and the British government, which began in late 1990, was one element of this. It allowed us to test the British government's attitude towards a real peace process in Ireland.

My talks with SDLP leader John Hume was another and, as it transpired, the most significant element in this initiative. In our joint statement of 10 April, 1993, we outlined our attitude on the key issue of national self-determination when we said:

"We accept that the Irish people as a whole have a right to national self-determination. This is a view shared by a majority of the people of this island, though not by all its people.

"The exercise of self-determination is a matter for agreement between the people of Ireland. It is the search for that agreement and the means of achieving it on which we will be concentrating.

"We are mindful that not all the people of Ireland share that view or agree on how to give meaningful expression to it. Indeed we do not disguise the different views held by our own parties.

"As leaders of our respective parties, we have told each other that we see the task of reaching agreement on a peaceful and democratic accord for all on this island as our primary challenge.

"We both recognise that such a new agreement is only achievable and viable if it can earn and enjoy the allegiance of the different traditions on this island, by accommodating diversity and providing for national reconciliation."

By September 1993, we had reached agreement on a set of proposals which, we believe, could form the basis of a viable peace process. This was dependent on the adoption of the proposals by the London and Dublin governments. Both

governments were fully informed of these matters at every stage in our discussions.

The proposals were based on a number of basic principles:

- * That the Irish people as a whole have the right to national self-determination
- * That an internal settlement is not a solution
- * That the unionists cannot have a veto over British policy
- * That the consent and allegiance of unionists, expressed through an accommodation with the rest of the Irish people, are essential ingredients if a lasting peace is to be established.
- * That the British government must join the persuaders.
- * That the London and Dublin governments have the major responsibility to secure political progress.
- * A process to realise these principles was agreed, containing the political dynamic which could create the conditions for a lasting peace and a total demilitarisation of the situation.

THE DOWNING STREET DECLARATION

The Downing Street Declaration is a response to all of this.

Republicans have to make fundamental assessments. Does the Downing Street Declaration represent a first step for the British government in the direction of a lasting peace? Or is it merely a political response by a British government under pressure from the Irish Peace Initiative, aimed at avoiding a political confrontation with the Dublin government, at fragmenting nationalist consensus and bringing political pressure to bear on Sinn Fein so as to damage us?

And even if our assessment is that it does not represent a first step for the British government Irish Republicans should not allow this to unduly influence our considerations on taking risks.

The consideration of any option available to us must be in the context of Sinn Fein's peace objectives and the strategy for their achievement.

- That is:
1. To eradicate the causes of conflict in Ireland.
 2. To bring about the exercise of the right to national self-determination of the Irish people as a whole.
 3. To establish a peace process to bring this about.

The issue of self-determination is central to the resolution of the conflict. That fact has now been identified and it is firmly on the political agenda.

Democracy demands that Britain recognises the right of the Irish people to determine our future in our own interests and on our own terms.

Any new agreement must respect the diversity of our different traditions and earn their allegiance. Present policies and political structures have prevented this from happening. Partition has deepened the divisions.

The Joint Declaration is described by its authors as 'the first step' towards a peace settlement. Sinn Fein is committed to such a settlement and I am concerned, I am indeed anxious to be persuaded that the Downing Street Declaration can provide the basis for this. And even if this is not the case,

If there is a gap between what is required and what is on offer then we should all move to bridge that gap.

CLARIFYING THE PROPOSED PEACE PROCESS

Sinn Fein and the nationalist community at a wider level, are examining the Downing Street Declaration in the context of the overall search for a real and lasting peace. This is the criteria within which the Declaration will be judged; whether it seeks to advance the peace process in a real way or is a cosmetic response to the Irish peace initiative.

The reality is that the Downing Street Declaration was formulated well into the present peace initiative. One thing at least is clear from this. This peace initiative did not come from the British government. They were quite prepared to sit on their hands. In fact, their response to developments in all aspects of the peace process was to undermine moves towards a peaceful settlement.

The present momentum for peace results from the Irish peace initiative.

There is, therefore, an understandable degree of suspicion and skepticism among Irish nationalists and republicans regarding the real motives and intentions of the British government. If it genuinely wishes to move forward, the first step for the British government must be an acceptance of its obligation to provide clarification on the Downing Street Declaration. It has already done so for other political parties. Its refusal to provide clarification for Sinn Fein must a matter of deep concern for everyone interested in peace.

In contrast, the attitude of the Dublin Government has been more constructive. It is clear that for the first time a Dublin government is making a serious attempt to address the issue of peace and a political settlement in the north of Ireland. This is a development which I welcome and which I hope will be built upon. The first tentative steps in what may be a difficult, and at times, frustrating task have been taken. The Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, has already taken steps to clarify his position in relation to these key issues. I am hopeful that this will assist us in assessing the Declaration and how it can contribute to an overall peace process.

In this context, I wish to commend Albert Reynolds. He has taken a positive and common sense attitude to the need to provide clarification. A letter from Mr. Reynolds awaits me on my return to Ireland and I hope it contains Dublin's view of the core issues, and of how the peace process can be advanced in a real and meaningful way.

Our inability to come to a definitive attitude, however, is tied totally to the British refusal to provide clarification. In other words, the sooner they provide this clarification the sooner we can move forward. I hope that they will follow the lead given by Mr. Reynolds.

The only logical reason for the British refusing clarification can be that they are working to their own political agenda.

Since the signing of the Declaration, there have also been contradictory commentaries from the British and Irish governments as to its meaning and significance. Clarifying the Declaration in the British House of Commons for Ulster Unionist party leader, Jim Molyneux, the British Prime Minister, John Major said that the Declaration meant:

- * No - to the value of achieving a united Ireland.
- * No - to a united Ireland.
- * No - to Britain joining the persuaders.
- * No - to any timetable for a united Ireland
- * No - to joint authority

- No - to any change in the unionist veto
- No - to a Dublin say in the affairs of the north.

- a view which is at odds with the Irish governments understanding of the Joint Declaration.

There are three issues that need to be clarified. There are aspects of the Declaration itself. There are the statements made by the authors of the Declaration - Mr. Reynolds and Mr. Major - which contradict one another. Then there is the whole issue of processes, measures and steps envisaged.

In its first paragraph the declaration is described as the governments' "first step". What then is the second step? Or the third? What processes are envisioned -- what measures are these to move the situation forward?

These are reasonable questions from a party with an electoral mandate. Clarifications have been given to other parties. Why not Sinn Fein? And of course is all of this what kind of signal are the British seeking to send by their stalling and delaying tactics?

There is little evidence that they are willing to join the persuaders. Are they? The Dublin government raises the issue of political prisoners and says there should be an amnesty as part of a settlement. Downing Street says no.

Downing Street also dismisses Albert Reynolds' suggestion about demilitarising the situation.

What we have at the moment is a free-standing Joint Statement. Where does it lead to? We are told that the British government is going to facilitate and encourage. What programmes do they envisage? And no matter about the validity of anyone else's interpretation of the Downing Street Declaration, the British government view of these matters is the crucial one.

Despite this, the potential for peace in Ireland has never been more realisable. If the British believe they have the basis of a settlement they must tell us what it is. I have already said that if there is a gap between what is on offer and what is required to move us out of conflict, then everyone involved has a responsibility to try to bridge that gap. This requires courage, imagination and flexibility. I have stated my willingness to assist in this process.

Sinn Fein has also initiated a series of peace forums in Ireland, which are open to everyone. We are actively engaging in our open and democratic way with citizens who wish to engage us on how peace can be established. It is our intention to publicise the oral and written submissions received by us. We have no hidden agenda. Peace needs people to build and sustain it and our consultative process is a way for securing this direct involvement.

THE UNITED STATES DIMENSION

It is clear that international interest and concern can also play an important and constructive part in the development of a viable peace process. There has been a consistent need for the international community to exercise its good will and influence to assist in the resolution of conflict worldwide. This is generally recognised and is at times acted upon. It has not, however, been a factor in the Anglo/Irish conflict. This situation needs to be rectified.

There is widespread interest in, and concern about, Ireland within North American public opinion. This stems from the historical links between the two countries and the large Irish American community in the US. The potential has, therefore, always existed for the US to play a part in the construction of an effective response to human rights abuses and this has been done, particularly, in the MacBride Campaign for Fair Employment. It is only proper that this

potential is realised in the wider search for a lasting settlement and I would appeal to all those in civic, political and industrial leadership in the USA to apply their energy in this direction.

Progressive opinion in the USA can assist in the development of a peace process in Ireland. There is an urgent need to break the current deadlock and to move the situation on towards a negotiated settlement and a lasting peace. The US government can play a significant and positive role in encouraging the peace process by helping to create a climate which moves the situation on. It can do this by facilitating the free exchange of information, and in this context I commend President Clinton for the waiver on visa denial which allows me to address you directly here today. The US government can assist at a wider level by actively seeking to encourage dialogue and agreement.

Sinn Fein has played a central and pivotal role in moving the situation from an apparently intractable conflict to one where there is now a focus on resolving the issues involved and building a lasting peace. I welcome the substantial and significant support which has been generated on these matters in the past several weeks in the USA. This is a concrete contribution to the search for peace from concerned individuals and organisations here.

It is clear that the British government have used all their influence, as in the past, to impede any progress on this or in any other matter which could influence or inform perceptions about the current situation in Ireland and the British governments responsibility for the present intolerable stand-off.

Notwithstanding this, let me reaffirm my commitment to move this situation on. The prize of peace for the Irish people, and the British people, is too important and the opportunity for peace cannot be squandered. Sinn Fein will seek, therefore, to overcome any obstacles and to be resourceful and imaginative in how we encourage and develop the peace process. We will continue to press ahead with our peace strategy in our search for a negotiated settlement and for a lasting peace in our country.

It is our intention to see the gun removed permanently from Irish politics.

This conference has made a unique and valuable contribution to this process.